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In this issue: [Sign Up to Receive the Collaborating Centre Connection](#)

[Spotlight: Leslie Nickels, AA4 Manager](#)
[Tackling Drug Abuse in the Workplace - a Holistic Approach](#)
[Work-related Musculoskeletal Disorders in a Globalising World](#)
[Upcoming Meetings and Conferences](#)
[Read past issues of Collaborating Centre Connection](#)
[Sign Up to Receive the Collaborating Centre Connection](#)

Spotlight: Leslie Nickels, AA4 Manager

Leslie graduated from Boston University with a B.S. and Northeastern University with a Master of Education in Audiology. She received her industrial hygiene training at the University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public Health, where she is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Curricular Studies.

For the past 18 years, Leslie has worked at the University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public Health as a lecturer, program director, and executive director of the Great Lakes Centers for Occupational and Environmental Safety and Health, a WHO Collaborating Center. The Center partners with programs engaged in education, training, policy, and outreach. It disseminates materials through web-based initiatives such as the GeoLibrary, <http://www.geolibrary.org>, a database of free training materials and practice tools in six languages.

Leslie embraces the philosophy that communication and cooperation, rather than competition, will reduce injuries and illnesses to workers. Through the Great Lakes Centers continuing education program, Leslie has been responsible for overseeing almost 200 training courses for physicians, nurses, industrial hygienists, and safety professionals.

Leslie's research focus includes: understanding the role of workers' centers in preventing injuries and illnesses to day laborers and temporary workers; creating intervention models for small businesses and employers who have non-fixed site workers such as home care and community outreach workers; and evaluating the effectiveness of using community outreach workers for addressing workplace problems. Recent research efforts have contributed to new public health legislation on lead poisoning prevention.

Leslie is married to a health planner and has two daughters; a doctoral student in chemistry and a freshman in college. In her leisure time, she enjoys biking, swimming, walking, basket making, weaving, knitting, and discussing books with her book group of 23 years.



Leslie Nickels, AA4 Manager

Tackling Drug Abuse in the Workplace - a Holistic Approach

By Ed Robinson and Jo Harris-Roberts, AA2

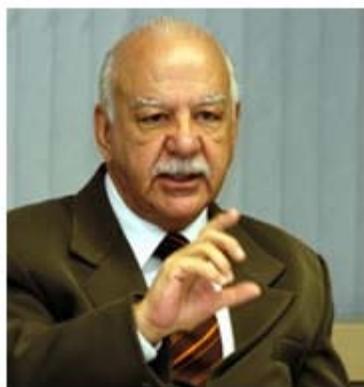


Qualidade de vida e
responsabilidade social

The concept of “well-being” amongst workers is fast becoming acknowledged as crucial to protecting the health and safety of a workforce. The portfolio of work in AA2 addresses worker well-being.

A team from SESI (Serviço Social da Indústria – The Brazilian National Department for Industrial Social Service) based in Brasilia and led by Dr. Vitor Gomes, has been working successfully on a large programme of work aimed at reducing drug abuse by workers in companies within ‘Southern Cone’ countries (i.e.: the southernmost areas of South America, including Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, and southern portions of Brazil).

This project entitled “Drug Abuse Prevention in the Workplace and Family” (WHO project AA2:PM6) builds on a model developed previously to tackle the misuse of drugs at work. The approach encourages employers within the private sector to build a healthy environment that directly benefits the communities in which they operate. It achieves this through a series of low cost/high impact preventative actions to effect behaviour change amongst healthy workers. The project provides support and mechanisms of referral for those already addicted and requiring specialised treatment. This proactive approach ensures a greater return on investment and makes full use of the work environment as the vehicle for introducing these incentives.



Dr. Vitor Gomes (SESI, Brazil) leads on a number of WHO projects including AA2:PM6

The tools used are tailored to individual company requirements and nominated technicians from within the organisation are trained to deliver these incentives in a flexible and sustainable manner. Whilst such an approach depends on the buy-in and support of the management, the benefits of successful implementation are sufficient to foster such support.

The success in reducing the abuse of illegal drugs and related sickness/absence has allowed the project to be rolled-out to larger sized companies across a wider geographic area. Further work will also be carried out to adapt the model to small sized enterprises, utilising company syndicates in the strategy. This work clearly represents an alternative strategy to improving the health and safety of employees by tackling issues that directly impact on individual well-being. The future results of this work will be of great interest to the health and safety community as a whole as drug abuse continues to present significant challenges to both working and social life.

Further details about this work on drug abuse in the workplace can be obtained from the project leader: vitor.gomes@sesi.org.br and for more information about Activity Area 2 or the Health & Safety Laboratory, please contact: cwh@hsl.gov.uk.

Work-related Musculoskeletal Disorders in a Globalising World

By Wendy Macdonald, AA1

At the opening session of PREMUS 2007¹, the Sixth International Conference on Prevention of Work-Related Musculoskeletal Disorders (WMSDs), Professor Lys Rocha from Brazil presented a keynote paper on *International Disparities in Development and How They Impact Work-related Musculoskeletal Disorders Prevention*. In industrialized and less developed countries, the incidence of WMSDs is related in complex ways to socioeconomic factors; many of which are

addressed by projects in the 2006-2010 Workplan of the WHO Network of Collaborating Centres in Occupational Health.

Professor Rocha reported that globalisation is affecting production processes in ways that transfer WMSD risk both within and between countries in South America. She pointed out that women working in maquiladoras², such as those shown sewing garments in the picture (from her presentation) are at high risk of developing chronic musculoskeletal injuries, often referred to as 'repetitive strain injury' or 'occupational overuse syndromes or disorders', due to hazards such as poor postures and highly repetitive actions. Further, she cited evidence that this risk is increased by stressful aspects of work organisation and workload such as inadequate rest breaks, high production quotas, and time pressures – stressors which are intensified by involvement in a global supply chain. Occupational health hazards related to globalisation are a central focus of Activity Area 1 of the WHO Network.



Looking at how to prevent WMSDs, Professor Rocha emphasized the importance of developing risk management 'toolkits' which are culturally appropriate, make the minimum possible demands on literacy skills, and are relevant to the work in question. Projects to develop and apply such toolkits to reduce the risk of WMSDs are underway in Brazil and in Activity Area 3 of the WHO Network (Australia and India). Possibilities for future collaborations between Professor Rocha's team and projects within the WHO Network will now be explored.

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¹This regular international gathering is the primary conference activity of the Musculoskeletal Disorders Scientific Committee of the International Commission of Occupational Health at <http://www.icohweb.org/committees/musculo.asp>.

²One aspect of 'globalisation' is the practice by some industrially developed countries of transferring production 'off-shore' – sometimes in maquilas or maquiladoras. (The latter are foreign-owned factories, typically in Central or South America, which import materials and equipment on a duty-free and tariff-free basis for assembly or manufacturing, and then re-export the assembled product – see Wikipedia)

Upcoming Meetings and Conferences

5th International Congress on Women, Work, Health, Zacatecas, Mexico, October 27 to 30, 2008. For more information, visit <http://www.zanzana-ac.org/vcongresswwh.php>

CC Meeting - Seoul, South Korea (KOSHA Safety World Congress) - afternoon of June 29, 2008.

CC Planning Committee Meeting - Munich, Germany – September 15-16, 2008.

CC Network Meeting - Cape Town, South Africa (ICOH '09 Congress) – March 19-20, 2009.

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